

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 1:15-23

Ephesians 1:15–23 (NKJV)

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.”

One of the great joys of teaching or being a pastor to others in the local and global church is seeing those in the family of God multiply and grow in their faith. The joy of every pastor/teacher is seeing excitement in the lives of fellow believers. This joy comes through a variety of expressions and through various circumstances.

- 1) Genuine discovery of the hope we have been given through an understanding of the true gospel of grace. (Forgiveness)
- 2) The blessing of being in the family of God – the Church He is building. (Belonging)
- 3) A deepening understanding in the sovereign plan and purposes of God. (Knowledge)
- 4) The power of God given to us (by grace), enabling us to live through the various trials we face in this life. (Power)
- 5) An understanding that God is at work in our lives, and “works all things together for the good of His own.” (Trust)
- 6) The personal joy of seeing others come to faith and maturity in Jesus. (Fruitfulness)
- 7) The understanding of future events and the eternal destiny we have in Christ. (Glory)

Paul directly and indirectly addressed these attributes when writing to the Ephesians. He rejoiced over them and thanked the Lord for the joy he experienced. His prayer is for their maturity in the things of God, and that they may have a full and fruitful maturity in Jesus.

Let's take a closer look.

- 1) Genuine discovery of the hope we have been given through an understanding of the true gospel of grace. (Forgiveness)

As believers we have been given total forgiveness in Christ. All our sins (past, present, and future) have been paid for. We are forgiven in Christ! There is therefore no future condemnatory judgment for the believer – and no condemnation in the present. We as believers are free to worship God without shame or trepidation. Even the shortcomings we still experience were known to God (from before the foundation of the world), and therefore we cannot disappoint Him, surprise Him, or incur His disdain. He saves us in spite of our weakness, and even in spite of our direct rebellion. (This is not a license to sin – we are called to obedience.) We are saved by placing our faith and trust in the Lord, not by works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-10) By faith alone, in Christ alone, by grace alone, we have been perfected forever. (Hebrews 10:14) We are forgiven!

- 2) The blessing of being in the family of God – the Church He is building. (Belonging)

As we have seen, God has predestined the believer to adoption. *“...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.”* (vs. 5) As believers we are forgiven all sin and provided eternal life, but there is more to the salvation provided than forgiveness and eternal life – there is belonging. We belong to the Church. We belong to the Lord as His inheritance. We have become *“the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”* (vs. 18) We belong to the family of God – we are adopted.

As adopted children we were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world. *“...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”* (vs. 4) Believers are no longer orphans or strangers; we are family. We are the sons and daughters of God and fellow heirs with our siblings: the Church. We belong!

- 3) A deepening understanding in the sovereign plan and purposes of God. (Knowledge)

“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling...” (vss. 15-18a)

Paul's desire is that all believers come to maturity in the knowledge of God. The more we know the Lord, and the more we understand His ways, the greater our experience in Him. We will have greater peace through the storms and trials of life, and will be enabled to help others who endure the same. Believers who understand and know the Lord (through the written word of God) will be prepared to minister. *“...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”* (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV)

The only way a believer can authoritatively know the character, ways, and plans of God is through the written word of God – the Bible. The Bible provides the believer with objective truth. The world would have us believe that all truth is relative. However, the Bible makes clear that this is not the case.

Secondly, we must be very careful not to rely on our emotions and feelings, the motivations of our hearts, or circumstances to dictate truth to us. Our circumstances, feelings and emotions can be very deceptive. We must also be aware of the fact that even books about God and the Bible can provide error and confusion. Only the Bible contains all the objective and definitive truths the believer can safely trust. Every believer has been given the indwelling Holy Spirit Who will lead us, guide us, and teach us the Scriptures. We must be careful in our reading to attentively study, paying attention to detail, context, dispensational relationship, etc. in order to grasp all the Bible has to offer. Therefore, as believers, we should read the Bible regularly and completely. As we do, we will be equipped in the knowledge God desires we should each possess.

“But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, says the LORD.” (Jeremiah 9:24 NKJV) *“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure.’”* Isaiah 46:9b–10 (NKJV)

We are a people of knowledge – the knowledge of the Lord.

- 4) The power of God given to us (by grace), enabling us to live through the various trials we face in this life. (Power)

As believers, we have been given the power of God to live in the present age – and in the ages to come. Many believers in and around the world suffer various difficulties – difficulties God allows them to endure. This is true of our generation, has been true in the past, and will be true for those in the future. Whatever our lot in life, God has and does give each believer the grace to live, by His power, in and through the circumstances we face. He desires that we know, *“what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.”* (vss. 19-20)

As we come to understand that God has given us the power to live in the present age, we will be encouraged to call upon Him and trust Him through times of difficulty. Those who trust in themselves, feelings, or circumstances will be tempted to take things into their own hands in order to cope. This fact has led many to look to drink, drugs, sex, etc. in order to numb their pain. Others seek recognition, personal places of authority, money, and pleasure. Sadly, some have even resorted to suicide in order to escape the circumstances they face.

Believers are given the power of God to “endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” 2 Timothy 2:3 (NKJV)

God has given us power!

- 5) An understanding that God is at work in our lives, and “works all things together for the good of His own.” (Trust)

When believers go through trials, trust is critical. Many believers exercise faith in God for salvation because they believe the facts of the Gospel. However, faith in God for salvation and trust in Him to work in our lives may be distinguished. Many believers struggle to trust the Lord to accomplish His purposes. They desire to help Him solve the problems (or perceived problems) they face. Abraham and Sarah provide a great example in illustration. When God told Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son in their old age, and that the son would be naturally born to the two of them, they felt that the possibilities were too great and therefore attempted to solve the perceived

problem by engaging Hagar in order to fulfill the promise. We often do the same. We look for ways to solve problems rather than trusting the Lord to do what He says He will do.

For example: as believers we desire to see our kids and grandkids saved. Therefore, as instructed, we train them up in the way they should go, pray for them, and encourage them in all the ways we are told to in Scripture. However, when we see them go through trials, struggle in their faith, or even rebel against what we have clearly taught them, we are tempted to manipulate, control, or threaten them in order to get them to the place we think they should be. However, God knows all those who are His, and will lose none of them. He draws them and works with them in the way only He can. It is in these times we learn to trust the Lord to work in their lives and accomplish His plans with them.

A man may struggle to provide for his family the ways he would like and therefore try to take things into his own hands in order to accomplish his goals. For example, he may be tempted to cheat on his taxes, or steal from the company cash register. However, he will soon learn that he is better served to pray and ask the Lord to open doors of opportunity, allow him to see ways to trim his budget, or simply provide a miracle. He must learn to trust the Lord.

We are all challenged from time to time with trust. However, the more we know God, the plans and ways of God, and the truths of the word of God, the easier trust becomes.

Our experiences in life tend to make us all struggle with trust. God understands this and therefore encourages us – in His Spirit and through His word – to grow in grace and in the knowledge of His will and ways.

Although faith and trust are closely linked, there are some distinctions we note. Faith to believe the Gospel is a gift and is based upon what we know to be true. Trusting God during times of trial and difficulty comes by growth in our relationship with Him. When we come to know the purposes and plans of God, and as we grow in the knowledge of Him, we will come to understand more fully He is at work in every area of our lives and nothing escapes His attention. *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* Romans 8:28 (NKJV) We are called to trust!

6) The personal joy of seeing others come to faith and maturity in Jesus. (Fruitfulness)

We are not responsible for the salvation of others. We are fully incapable of saving anyone. Salvation is the work of God and it is God alone who can open the blind eyes of an unbeliever, soften their hearts, and grant them faith to believe. However, as we grow, we learn that it is the great privilege of every believer to share the Gospel with others and to assist others in their walk with the Lord. There is a tremendous joy that overwhelms our souls when we see a sinner turn to Christ for forgiveness of sin and experience regeneration. This is what Paul experienced (and expressed) when he said, *“Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.”* (vs. 15)

Secondly, we, as members of the household of God, are privileged with the opportunity to minister to one another, and assist one another in growth. This is true fellowship – when we speak together, pray together, and grow together in the things of God, a joy that is unexplainable grips us and we celebrate.

Whether we are the ones who pray with a person just coming to Christ, meet a stranger that we discover is a fellow believer, or are blessed with the fellowship of other believers in a group setting, we have a spiritual joy and blessing knowing that others are being saved and built up in the things of God. We are a people of fruitfulness and have personal joy seeing others come to faith and maturity in Jesus. (Fruitfulness)

7) The understanding of future events and the eternal destiny we have in Christ. (Glory)

Finally, as believers, we are given tremendous insight into the things to come. The Bible is loaded with prophecy and insight into future events. The study of end times is called eschatology. Scholars have been entertained and challenged through the study of eschatology for centuries.

Paul gives a briefing when he says that God *"...raised Him [Jesus] from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* (vss. 20b-23)

Here we learn that there is a throne room in heaven, and that Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father. We learn that the Father declared Jesus *"far above"* all of creation: all in heaven, in the earth, in hell, and for all time. Jesus is the preeminent one and to Him every knee will bow! We learn that Jesus is the head of the Church and that the Church is called the *"body"* of Christ. We are uniquely united with Him. *"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."* Colossians 1:18 (NKJV)

In the days to come, every believer will be gathered together as one and enjoy all the fullness promised in Jesus.

In Jesus' *"High Priestly Prayer"* He prayed that we would all be one – in Him. *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."* John 17:20–26 (NKJV) Jesus' prayer will be answered with a *"Yes"* and *"Amen"*! Praise the Lord for the wonderful things we have to look forward to – in Him.

As believers we are privileged with access to God in prayer. Today we all agree with Paul and pray even as he prayed, *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."* (vss. 17-23)

Questions

True or False: Genuine hope has been given to each of us through an understanding of the true gospel of grace. We are forgiven.

True or False: We belong to the Lord and are as His possession. He bought us at a price: His own blood.

True or False: God is sovereign and has a plan and purpose for each of us.

True or False: God has given us His power - by grace - and enables us to live through all the trials we may face in this life.

True or False: I understand that God is at work in my life and is “working all things together for my good.”

True or False: All believers will manifest fruitfulness in the Lord. However, God causes and allows the fruit to grow in me. That fruitfulness does not come by my human effort, but is benefitted by my willing surrender to His work in me.

True or False: Understanding future events is impossible. I should not think about it.

True or False: Eschatology is the study of “things to come.”

True or False: God has revealed much of the future to us in His word.

Notes: